

8 Tips To Get Your Boss To Trust You

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By Richard B.
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Can you trust your boss? Of course not — s/he's your boss, for chrissakes!

Silly question, right? At best, the saying “trust but verify” comes to mind. Perhaps a more important question is can your boss trust you?

Your boss is not your friend, not your lover (hopefully), and not your confidant, but your BOSS. There are proper and appropriate things to tell your boss, and things not so much.

Understand that, as the [Workplace Therapist](#) says, “your boss has a lot of priorities on his/her list that rank higher than you. ... Your career, your personal/professional growth, and your personal life/personal responsibilities are yours and only yours to own and manage.”

Hmmm ... “yours to own and manage.”

Building A Culture Of Trust

That said, a [fascinating article](#) in the Harvard Business Review entitled *The Neuroscience of Trust* caught my eye — research results published by Professor Paul Zak. Considering the matter from an employer's point of view, he said that “creating an employee-centric culture” is good for business, and that “building a culture of trust is what makes a meaningful difference.”

Hmmm ... “building a culture of trust.”

He noted that:

“Gallup's [meta-analysis](#) of decades' worth of data ... shows that high engagement—defined largely as having a strong connection with one's work and colleagues, feeling like a real contributor, and enjoying ample chances to learn—consistently leads to positive outcomes for both individuals and organizations. The rewards include higher productivity, better-quality products, and increased profitability.”

Hmmm, again ... “having a strong connection with one's work and colleagues.”

He then cited his lab research into the role of oxytocin, a chemical in the brain, and trust. He found that oxytocin does only one thing — “reduce the fear of trusting a stranger.” The higher the level of oxytocin the higher the level of trust.

This is all very nice, but what does that mean to you?

Well, since it is now clear that trust in the workplace is key to workplace satisfaction, increasing oxytocin can help build this “culture of trust.” And he found that high stress inhibits oxytocin, and that trust increases it.

He then was able to develop a “survey instrument that quantifies trust,” and identified “eight management behaviors that foster trust” — that build the culture of trust that he extols.



What A Manager Should Do

Professor Zak, again from an employer's point of view, listed the following eight tips for managers: recognize excellence soon after a goal has been met; induce "challenge stress" (the stress from attainable challenges apparently releases oxytocin); allow employees some discretion in how they perform their job; permit, where possible, employees to choose projects that interest them ("job crafting"); keep employees informed about goals and strategies; allow socializing to build teams and workplace relationships; help employees to grow personally ("facilitate whole person growth"); and ask for help, *i.e.*, "show vulnerability."

Again, all this is interesting, and now you know what your boss should be doing, but so what?

But You Are An Employee, So What Can *You* Do?

Okay, so let's switch it around. Can *you*, an associate or employee, contribute somehow to this "culture of trust"? And if so, how? Because if you can, that would go a long way towards a more satisfying workplace!

If the boss is advised to do these eight things, employees should think about how to encourage or nudge the boss to do them. And employees should actively create the means to achieve them.

How?

The answers are not so difficult to figure out, especially if the boss already plays his/her part in these eight factors. In any event, we can think logically and intuitively and come up with some tips.

1. I suppose it sounds silly, but give the boss a reason to "recognize" you — be excellent (yeah — easier said than done), and be sure the boss knows it (without tooting your own horn too much).
 2. Challenge yourself. Ask for and accept challenging assignments and tell the boss (before it is assigned to you) what types of assignments interest you the most or are within your sweet spot. Push your limits.
 3. If "teams" are within your firm model, reach out to others to bond with them and foster a team, which, not coincidentally, prevents isolation and keeps you engaged (same as with the rest of your life, hopefully). And let your boss know that your team is ready, willing, and more than able to tackle any challenging tasks!
 4. Ask for feedback, if you do not already get it — and use that opportunity to express the above ideas. Maybe even gently (subliminally?) hint at these eight factors.
 5. Ask and learn about (and show interest in) the firm's goals and strategies, keep abreast of any changes, and try to operate within this framework.
 6. Support your "teammates," be worthy of their trust, and (the hardest thing) try to develop trust in them (if they deserve it). Remember: your goal is to up your oxytocin! (Don't you wish you could do this with a change of diet or a new workout routine? It would be so much simpler!).
 7. And if your boss is a "your job is to support me" type, by all means make an effort to do so, without compromising your values or your own career needs.
 8. Finally, obey the Golden Rule. This is always a good idea, and it seems to fit in nicely here.
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